

## George Lloyd – Biography

Rough Draft 3/1/20

### Prelude: Bohemian St Ives and Celtic Connections

Add more dates

*A brief history of antecedents is set out in a separate chapter. We pick up the story a few years before the birth of the composer George Walter Selwyn Lloyd at St Eia, a large house overlooking St Ives bay, on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1913.*

There had been at least one boy child named George in each generation of the Lloyd family since the birth of the composer's great-great-great-grandfather, George Lloyd of Manchester, FRS, in 1708. His grandson was George Lloyd of Cowesby, in North Yorkshire, and the composer's namesake grandfather was Captain George Walter Lloyd RN, (known as Captain Walter, presumably because there were three other George Lloyds in the family at the time.) On his mother's side, the composer's second middle name - Selwyn, - was a tribute to his maternal grandfather, John Selwyn Rawson of The Haugh End, near Sowerby Bridge in Yorkshire. (Note: The Haugh End was the location for the 2019 filming of the BBC Drama *Gentleman Jack*. Anne Lister was a friend of the Rawsons.)



*Father: William A C Lloyd*



*Mother: Constance Lloyd (Primrose)*

The composer's parents, William (known as Will) and Constance, (known as Primrose or Prim) were second cousins. Both were children of the gentry, although William Lloyd's life story at the time they were married in 1907 was as eccentric as Prim's was conventional. Their 45-year marriage was at times a bumpy ride, - a volatile combination of bohemian lifestyles, two World Wars with consequent shell-shock (PTSD), the unexpected transformation from struggling bohemian to the inheritance of great wealth in the form of a country estate, Bolshevik political sympathies, marital separation, reconciliation and a constant undercurrent of painting, poetry, archaeology, folklore, fairy stories, and most of all music.

Will had been born in Rome, been brought up by his mother, Frances Lloyd, a single parent following the early death of her husband. Frances was a Theosophist and an admirer of Madame Blavatsky, who was interested only in painting. According to her grand-daughter Marianne, she was impractical at domestic work of any kind, did not see dust at all and lived in a terrible muddle. She was also an opera singer, a fine painter, and a pioneer early member of the St Ives Artists' Colony. She and William lived on a Royal Navy Widow's pension of £190.00 per year, and although the wealthy side of the family had assisted with Will's education, when the 19-year old Will Lloyd inherited property from a childless uncle in 1904, it came as a surprise. The bohemian art student and opera lover suddenly found himself the Lord of the Manor and master of a substantial estate at Cowesby Hall, on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors.

The culture shock was profound. Will abandoned his painting classes in Folliot Stokes' studio in St Ives and moved to the wilds of North Yorkshire, where he set up house with his mother. Within three years Will had married his cousin Prim, and Frances had moved back South, to stay first with her sisters-in-law in Weybridge and then back to St Ives. Their first child, Marianne, was born within a year, but although Will diligently took up his Manorial duties, he never settled to that life and after two years of marriage and five years as a country gentleman, he and Prim moved back to St Ives. His newfound wealth allowed him to purchase Julius Olsson's house at St Eia, and he took up the Bohemian life which he had grown up with.

The correspondence reveals a merry-go-round of painting classes, exhibitions, trips to London to the opera, playing the flute in the local orchestras, writing poetry, designing costumes for a fancy-dress party, and acting as a lynch-pin of the artistic colony as Secretary to the St Ives Arts Club. Two of Will Lloyd's close friendships illustrate the excitement and variety of life in St Ives at



Committee of the St Ives Arts Club

that time and why he preferred it to the gentrified life of a Yorkshire landowner. The artists' colony in St Ives was cosmopolitan, and attracted painters from all over the world, one of whom was the American sea-scape artist Paul Dougherty. He and Will became friends and together they made several climbing trips to Switzerland, where Dougherty painted the Matterhorn in oils and presented Will with the fine

picture which he produced, together with one of his seascapes of Zennor Cove.

Shortly after moving back to St Ives, Will Lloyd befriended the oceanographer Franz-Joseph Ludwig Georg Count Larisch, son of Maria, Countess Larisch. Maria had been implicated in one of the greatest scandals to befall the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, the Mayerling Incident, when she acted as the go-between for the Archduke Rudolf and his mistress Mary Vetsera. When the lovers were found dead in mysterious circumstances in the hunting lodge at Mayerling, Countess Larisch was ostracised and fled to England with her son. (See separate chapter for details of the Mayerling incident.) He became an oceanographer and travelled the world taking soundings, making charts, and taking photographs for what was to become the first Atlas of the Oceans, and between trips he had a studio in St Ives where he prepared his material. In addition to his celebrity as the son of Maria, he had a fund of stories and George Lloyd's brother Walter relates how Count Larisch was able to recite Homer's *Odyssey*, from memory, in Greek. Will assisted Larisch with the rent on his studio for a time, and their correspondence shows clearly the high regard they had for each other.

George's mother had a more conventional upbringing than her adventurous husband. She was born in 1889, and christened Constance Priestly Rawson, although she was always known as Primrose or Prim. Her mother was Irish, a daughter of Philip Dwyer, a Dubliner who graduated in Theology from Trinity College, was ordained as priest in 1845 and was Rector of St. Columba's Church in Ennis, County Clare from 1864 until 1883. Philip Dwyer was a serious historian who wrote several significant books, including *A History of the Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. This mighty tome combines local and literary sources to trace the troubled history of County Clare through the endless bloody struggle with the English invaders to his first-hand account of the Great Famine.



*Prim in St Ives*

Philip Dwyer's father was a barrister-at-law and became the Irish Commissioner for Lunacy. When George Lloyd's brother Walter enquired of his uncle, Selwyn Rawson, as to further details of their Irish ancestry, he replied with some factual information about the family and ended his letter with a postscript in red:

*'Contrary to whatever you may find in the Parish records, the Dwyers and the Crowes were descended from God, Brian Boru, and the High Kings of Tara, but they gloried in the achievements of their ancestors to such a degree that they went to seed in great measure.'*

Canon Philip Dwyer himself was in no danger of going to seed. A bold and enterprising man, he not only proposed the building of St Columba's, the large protestant church in Ennis, but he raised the necessary funds and managed the construction of the building. In 1883 he resigned his position and emigrated with his large family to British Columbia. After a long sea voyage, they landed in Panama, where the canal was still under construction, so they travelled by mule cart to the Pacific, enduring a cholera epidemic and a hurricane on the way. After four years in Canada, at the age of 65, Philip Dwyer took a retirement position as vicar of Sowerby, near Halifax, leaving three of his sons and four of his daughters, now married, in Vancouver. Within a year of arriving in England his daughter Annie married John Selwyn Rawson, a wealthy industrialist.

The Rawson family had been active in West Yorkshire since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century they had married into many of the landed gentry families in the area, including

Saltmarshes, Stansfelds, Waterhouses, Empsons and the Priestleys, with whom the Rawsons of Sowerby married three times. They were Justices of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenants of the West Riding, and owned the Rawson Bank in Halifax. By 1900 the Rawsons owned several large houses in and around Halifax, supported by several woollen mills. Although Prim's father John Selwyn Rawson was a second son, and therefore did not inherit the bulk of the family fortune, nevertheless she was born into a comfortable and secure position in the landed gentry.

Prim had known of the existence of her second cousin, William Lloyd, for most of her life, since his great aunt had married her great-great-grandfather, but their paths hardly crossed until William was plucked from the deeply unconventional artists' colony in St Ives and installed as the master of Cowesby Hall, about 40 miles away from Rawson territory. They married in 1907, when William was 22 and she was 17.

Within a year of their marriage their first daughter, Marianne was born. William diligently attended to his duties as a landowner, constructing almshouses for ancient retainers of the Manor and rebuilding Cowesby church, where many of his ancestors were buried but it was clear that his heart was not in it. Prim adopted the style and manner which suited her social position as the wife of the Lord of the Manor. [Picture in ball gown / wedding gown?] Although the house was large, gloomy, draughty and damp, there were beautiful grounds, a large kitchen garden, and a small estate, with staff. Nevertheless, family lore relates that she was not altogether suited with her change in status and was feeling her way into the formalities and conventions of genteel life. She told her daughter Marianne that she had been uncomfortable giving orders to the housemaids - always a shibboleth in gentry households. Prim related how, when she received visitors in the drawing room, if the fire needed to be stoked with coal, she would ring the bell for a servant. She felt that that was what was expected of her and thought, probably correctly, that her guests would think less of her if she handled the coal scuttle.

We have no information about how Prim reacted when in 1909, after two years of marriage, Will decided to abandon Cowesby Hall and get back to his painting classes and the vibrant social scene in St Ives. When she, Will and Marianne established themselves in the newly-purchased house at St Eia, the artist's colony was in its Edwardian heyday, unaware of the impending cataclysm, and Prim's style and manner changed like a chameleon after the move, which was clearly a liberation. She took up smoking cigarettes and exchanged the fine gowns and large hats befitting the Lady of the Manor for homespun clothes and a battered trilby. Instead of formal tea parties at Cowesby Hall she entertained musicians, painters, weavers, potters, poets, Russian aristocrats and enthralling raconteurs at lively soirées at the Arts Club and the music room at St Eia. She took up weaving exotic patterned textiles and developed a serious interest in Celtic myth and legend, and

within a year or two of moving to St Ives she had acquired a small library of books on that subject. Her collection included Charlotte Guest's definitive and popular translation of the Welsh *Mabinogion* (1877), Rolleston's *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race* (1911), Evans' *The Ancient bards of Britain* (1906), Wentz' *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, and Douglas Hyde's *Irish Folk Tales* (1890.) Prim went on to correspond with Douglas Hyde, who although Anglo-Irish Protestant, was a founder of *The Gaelic League* and who, with W B Yeats and J M Synge was a key figure in the Celtic Revival and the pre-war elevation of Irish language and literature, which in turn provided the intellectual and cultural basis for the Irish nationalism which lay behind the Easter Rising of 1916. Douglas Hyde eventually became president of Ireland after the Civil War. The George Lloyd archive includes several letters from Douglas Hyde inviting Prim to meet him, along with signed presentation copies of two of his books, and several volumes of works by J M Synge.

Prim's interest in Celtic culture was prompted not only by her Irish ancestry but also by her mother-in-law, Frances Lloyd. Frances was a member of the Theosophical Society, partly as a result by her experience seeing what she believed to be the soul of her first child, Eugene, leaving his body at the moment of his death at the age of 1 year. Frances travelled regularly to Theosophist meetings in London and in [ ] she travelled to New York where she gave an address to the Theosophical Society. She chose spiritual and mythological themes for several of her large paintings, two of which were shown in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. In 1914 The Theosophical University Press published *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*, a reworking of the Welsh *Mabinogion* stories, an influential book now considered to be the precursor to Tolkien and Ursula le Guin "*Morris's style is "bardic", but without any descents into sentimentality or bathos; his control of long prose rhythms is perhaps unmatched in twentieth-century fantasy literature.*" (Online Review) Prim's copies of the books of this period in her library are well thumbed and slightly battered, indicating that they clearly had a life away from the library shelves - they were read several times, and probably passed from hand to hand.

William Lloyd's aunt, Eleanor Lloyd, was a serious historian and genealogist and spent many years methodically and persistently tracing the Lloyd family genealogy back to the Welsh princes, and in one line back to Macsen Wledig, a historical warrior hero who figures as a major character in *The Mabinogion*. Will was fascinated by early Celtic literature and by the prehistoric and megalithic remains in West Penwith (the peninsula which extends from St Ives to Land's End). After the Great War Wil and Prim were founder members and driving forces behind the West Cornwall Archaeological Field Club, which carried out significant excavations of early bronze age and Iron Age settlements in the area, and they later founded the Wayside Museum in Zennor, where they

collected artefacts from prehistoric sites and from two thousand years of Cornish tin mining and agriculture.

With this background, so heavily entangled with Celtic genealogy, literature and myth, it is little wonder that George Lloyd considered himself a Celt. George Lloyd's first opera, *Iernin*, about a fairy maiden turned to stone by the Christians, had a libretto written by his father, and the names of the characters show a clear association with early Celtic poetry and mythology as well as local folklore. Prim and Will considered themselves Irish and Welsh respectively, and their spiritual home was Cornwall. Will's mother Frances was part Welsh, her paternal grandparents having emigrated from Powys in Wales to the USA in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and she and her brother William Henry Powell Jnr had attempted, unsuccessfully, to regain possession of property in Wales which they believed had been stolen from them. The Lloyds in St Ives were certainly aware that the Welsh and Cornish languages, literature and oral traditions represented by the books in their library were all that remained of the ancient British culture which had been driven back by the Anglo-Saxons. They knew all about the Irish invasion of Scotland in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, and the key role played by the Irish speaking monks in converting the heathen Anglo-Saxons in the early Dark Ages. George's Lloyd's brother Walter recalls that their mother and father both knew the Irish, Welsh and Cornish stories from memory. Prim's library of Celtic literature included several volume of Cornish folk tales, and Walter grew up with them as bedtime stories and party pieces. He could still hold an audience by relating many of those tales from memory, a genre which he called the *Romance of The Stones*, into his 90's.

The material and content of the Celtic Twilight was not the only effect on the young composer's aesthetic sensibilities. George Lloyd himself acknowledged that at the age of 19 he was a 'committed Romantic' although he was careful to point out that he outgrew that phase and moved away from Romanticism, preferring a more robust and vivacious style of composition. In the 1990s he was not pleased when described by journalists as an '*arch Late-Romantic composer in an era of Modernism*' although it is not difficult to detect the origin and the relevance of that description. Not only is Romanticism the *milieu* into which he was born, but George acknowledged that his musical heroes were the two arch Romantics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – Berlioz and Verdi.

The Romantic movement in art and music was characterised by emotional content as much as intellectual or rational content, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Celtic Revival established naïve folk art, as expressed through vernacular and oral traditions, as a respectable, desirable, even noble source of inspiration. There was a preference for medievalism, exemplified in the mythology of the stories of the *Mabinogi* and their European cousins, the ballads of the Troubadours. There

was a preference for a language which was deliberately archaic, and a tendency towards the mystic and supernatural. The Romantics sought to break free from convention, from classicism and from the rationalism of the Enlightenment by returning to myth, to heroic subject matter and to the imagination of heroic poets, painters and composers. The romance of the early Celtic literature is summarised by a passage from the introduction to the epic fairy-tale *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*:

*“Why then do the Romances stand in a class by themselves? Why are they for the whole world and for all time, when the poetry of that age was only for that time and only for Wales? The answer is because the Romances came down from a much older time, because when they were written they were still near enough in the spirit of that time to carry with them some of its force, which subjected the brain/mind and the animal man to the domination of the divine part, the deathless and birthless soul. Realism will never call forth the genius of a race that has always been nearest greatness when most leaning towards spiritual and imaginative ideals.”*

Added to this yearning for a lost state of grace, the Romantic movement placed central importance on the artist’s feelings and imagination, and a preference for improvisation and inspiration in performance to achieve the desired effect. Tone was as important as content in evoking a meaningful response in the audience, and that meaningful response depended on the artist’s ability to inspire through the creation of universal archetypes, which required little or no intellectual context, or prior knowledge, and very little effort (from the audience at least, although the artist might suffer a long and difficult labour) in order to do their work. The aesthetics and spirituality of Late Romanticism were clearly at work in the paintings of Frances Lloyd, and in William and Prim’s preoccupation with prehistoric archaeology, Irish and Welsh literature and mythology, the Celtic Twilight, and this was the world into which the composer George Lloyd was born in June 1913. David Tovey in his definitive books on St Ives during this period, quotes a contemporary observer who describes the atmosphere like this:

*“A more genial, kindly, hospitable society does not exist. Simplicity of life, refinement and cultivated taste, love of outdoor nature, and freedom from convention were its principal attractions and, unsurprisingly, writers and other practitioners of the Fine Arts soon settled in the locality. The St Ives Arts Club, which, from the outset, was open to such persons, and also to females, was the focal point of social activity and promoted a good communal spirit. However, aware that they should not be seen as an exclusive enclave, the artists put on many performances for the townspeople, introducing them to Carnival Masquerades, tableaux vivants, glee singing and variety entertainment.”*

When George Lloyd was born, the Lloyd family was at the centre of the Arts Club, which was itself at the centre of a St Ives culture full of drama, colour, energy, creativity, sensation, experiment, music and laughter, all of which came to a sudden end in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I and the cataclysm that followed. Paul Dougherty headed back to America, Count Larisch was forced to leave St Ives in a great hurry, for fear of internment, sending urgent letters to Will asking him to clear out his studio and take care of his life's work – the dozens of printing plates he was preparing for publication in his ground-breaking atlas. According to one account, after war was declared, Larisch's studio was raided, and charts of every cove, road, track, rock, tides and currents were found together with copious diaries, so it was assumed that Larisch was a German spy. George Lloyd's archive tells a different story however, as there are letters from Larisch's friends describing the cloak-and-dagger enterprise in which cabin trunks full of maps and printing plates to St Eia in the dead of night, where they remained for the rest of the war. Will Lloyd provided the funds which allowed Larisch to escape back to Germany, and Larisch presented him with one of his large photographs of a 40-foot wave, taken off Cape Horn at the turn of the century.

Will himself enlisted in the Leeds Rifles, was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, and spent the next 5 years as a logistics and supply officer in the trenches in France. He returned in 1918 with a Military Cross, a book of war poems, and burden of memories so appalling that he could never bring himself to speak of them.



*George with his mother, Zennor, 1917*

For his first 5 years of life, George hardly saw his father except for a few weeks when he had leave to come home from the fighting in France. He was brought up by his mother and his older sister, Marianne, with the help of various nannies. The three of them retreated to Cowesby Hall for holidays from time to time, but George himself seldom mentioned Cowesby or referred to it in his many interviews – he considered himself a Cornishman, not a Yorkshireman, a Celt and not a Saxon. Cowesby Hall was another world, and by now Prim had become a naturalised St Ives resident. There is a series of photographs of a family outing to the beach in Cornwall in which George looks about 4 years old, and his mother appears in a battered jacket cigarette in hand, and a mischievous smile on her face.

When the war ended and Will came home, there is little doubt that he was damaged by his experiences. The manor at Cowesby Hall had hardly changed, but his whole outlook had shifted. Will

was in sympathy with the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of October 1919, and the life of the country gentleman was now anathema to him. He had never felt at home among the English gentry and after the inescapable brutality of the trenches, the sober life of a Justice of the Peace in the Yorkshire county circle was intolerable. He preferred the Italian opera houses, or even the company of Welsh farmers or the infantrymen of the Leeds Volunteers. According to his daughter Marianne he rejected his inherited class, and could no longer stand to live at Cowesby Hall, where he represented a class which may have won the war, but which had lost the support of most ordinary people.

He would have liked to return to the carefree life in St Ives before the war, but that was impossible. Although he restarted the musical weekends at St Eia, which George remembered so clearly as influencing his musical development, and the Arts Club was still functioning, the atmosphere in St Ives had changed drastically from the adventurous Edwardian days of his youth, just a few years previously. Many of his friends were dead, and the pointlessness of the Great War cast a heavy shadow across the arts, economics, and politics. The Romance of the Celtic Twilight evaporated with the Easter Rising and was buried in the brutality of the Irish Civil War. Will had become depressed, unable to sleep, withdrawn and irritable - common symptoms among those who had witnessed the horrors of Flanders.

After his mother died in 1921, aged 66, he took some drastic steps. Frances had been living with Will and Prim after she became unable to take care of herself, and although his son George was only 8 years old, he felt that he was relatively free of responsibility. He decided to sell everything and move to Wales. The first move was to sell Cowesby Hall to his Land Agent – at less than half its true value according to his family, but he told no-one until it was done and dusted. The first thing his wife Prim knew was a telegram saying ‘Have sold Cowesby. Arriving St Ives Wednesday.’

This drastic move coincided with his meeting (and a presumed affair) with a (nameless) singer (or maybe a dancer, depending on whose account is given) and his marriage was suddenly on the rocks. The recriminations were bitter and protracted, and Will and Prim parted company. There were no half-measures. Once Cowesby Hall was off his hands he sold the fine house at St Eia and with the funds he purchased Bridge Cottage in Zennor, a coastal village a few miles to the South, where his mother had stayed when she first came back to England from Italy. Prim moved in to Bridge Cottage, and Will himself purchased a remote and ruined farmhouse, Bryn Tyrch Uchaf, near Capel Curig in Snowdonia, North Wales. The property was derelict and required a complete rebuild, but after two years of wrangling with builders and contractors, Will lost heart. He broke off the affair with the lady, sold up in Snowdonia and returned to his wife and family in Zennor.

Such drastic but failed attempts to destroy his social structures, to break away and to make a new start, are now recognised as completely consistent with undiagnosed ‘shell shock’ or PTSD

from his experiences on the front line in France, but curiously no documents have survived relating to any medical or psychological treatment. According to Will's children, he never spoke of it, and the information about his crisis comes from George's sister Marianne, who was 13 at the time, and George's brother Walter, who believed that he was the result of his parents' reconciliation. George Lloyd never referred to their separation in later interviews or conversations, although it may be significant that at exactly this time, he suffered the first of 3 bouts of rheumatic fever, which were to keep him bedridden and away from school for several months. He does recall spending many weeks in his bedroom overlooking St Ives Bay, and attributed some of his aesthetic sense of orchestral colour to the vibrant colours of sea and sky which he studied in detail for weeks on end while in a fevered state looking out of the window at St Eia.

In 1923, with the fine mansions of Cowesby Hall and St Eia now gone, the Lloyd family underwent yet another metamorphosis. Bridge Cottage had no electricity, no running water, and of course no huge studio. The photographs show that the Lloyds lived 'like gypsies,' - carrying water and gathering furze for fuel, and shopping in town once a week. It was in this period that Prim befriended several Gypsy families, who would call by from time to time selling clothes pegs, baskets, dried flowers and herbs. According to Walter, Bridge Cottage was the only house in the village where the gypsy women would stay for a cup of tea and a chat, and when Walter asked his mother why this was so, she explained that she followed the Gypsy hygiene custom of using two separate bowls for washing – one for the hands and clothes, and a separate one for eating and cooking utensils. Gypsies would not take food or drink from a household which did not follow their custom. Prim had been brought up to be respectful, polite and hospitable towards Gypsy people, as her father Fred Rawson had been, and her relationship with Romany people was to have a significant effect on two generations of Lloyds, who became closely involved with Gypsy and Traveller families, acting as advisors, and giving assistance with dealing with authorities such as police and planning authorities. Walter Lloyd spoke Romany, built Gypsy living wagons, and was a driving force in the preservation and revival of several Gypsy horse fairs.

The bohemian lifestyle was adopted out of choice, rather than necessity. Will's post-war crisis had resulted in his mis-handling the sale of Cowesby Hall and estate, the sale of his fine house at St Eia, and dysfunctional purchase and re-sale of the ruined cottage at Bryn Tyrch I chaf, but the family were still comfortably off. Will did not need to work for a living, although he took up an appointment as a Director of the Rawson woollen company in Halifax. Their second son, Walter Frances Lloyd was born in December 1924, and in 1925, when George had recovered from his persistent illness he was sent to Belmont School in Falmouth. By 1927, Will had discovered a new

purpose that was to dominate his life until 1939 – the development of his son George as a composer.

### **Additional material**

Letters, photographs and other evidence 1920 – 1927

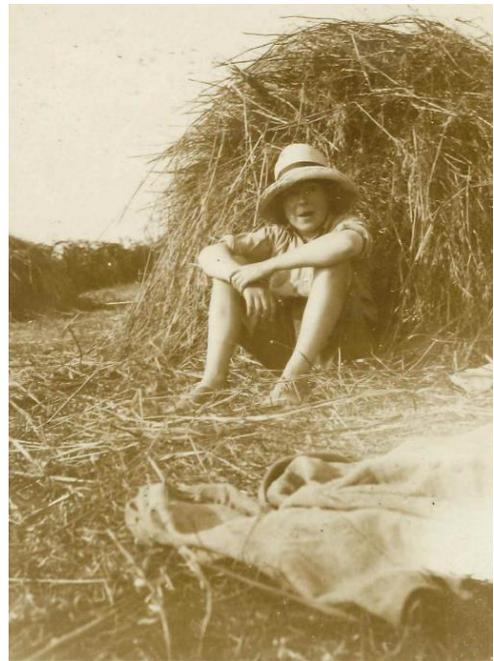
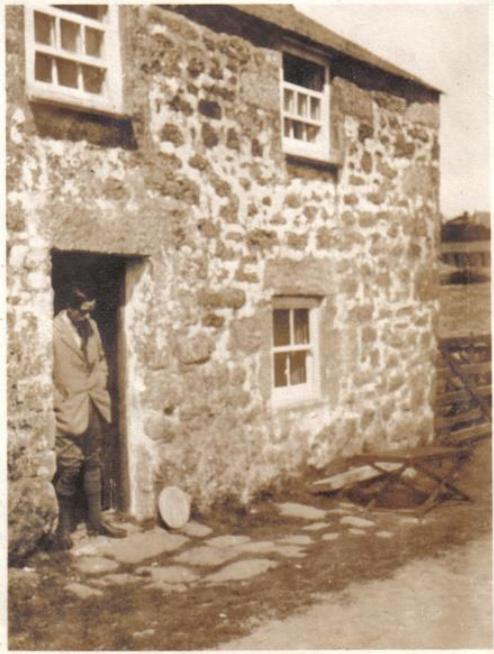
Douglas Hyde Correspondence.

Sale of Cowesby Hall and estate accounts

Review Tovey book 'St Ives - Artists in the Community.'

*Question / confirm dates: Sale of St Eia Purchase Bridge Cottage Sale of Cowesby.*

Review Romanticism material



**Images, clockwise from top left.**

- 1922 Will at Bridge Cottage, Zennor
- 1917 Prim and friends. Perranporth  
George behind the wheel.  
Marianne in the window.
- 1922 George in Zennor, 1924
- 1917 Prim with friends. Perranporth
- 1917 Prim and Marianne Perranporth



*Prim and Marianne, Perranporth 1917*

